



THE "INDIAN" SIGN

WHEN the unexpected happens, it's usually regarded as an accident. When it happens again, it may be tabbed as a coincidence. When it happens a third time, it's neither an accident nor a coincidence. It's become a habit.

In boxing, they call it the "Indian Sign."

To American aborigines, an "Indian Sign" could be either for good or evil—a blessing bestowed or a curse invoked by the tribal medicine man.

In this rugged trade, an "Indian Sign" has come to describe the strange power an inferior fighter may exert over a more talented rival.

Ring history is loaded with notable cases of the "Indian Sign" in operation. Even world champions have been victims.

A current case of one ringster having the "Indian Sign" on a more highly regarded opponent involves light-heavyweights Sonny Ray of Chicago and Jesse Bowdry of St. Louis.

Out of a total of 72 bouts as amateur and professional, Bowdry has suffered only three defeats—and all three have been administered by Ray, the last two by knockouts.

Yet off their respective fistic qualifications and overall records, Ray wouldn't appear to belong in the same ring with Bowdry.

Jesse is fast, clever and an explosive puncher.

Ray is slow, awkward and more of a mauler than a puncher.

Bowdry was one of the finest amateurs produced in recent years. Unbeaten in 45 outings as a medal-chaser, 38 of his victories were by knockouts, and he twice punched his way to the National Golden Gloves middleweight title.

Ray was a comparative nonentity as an amateur, competing for no important laurels, and losing seven of his 29 starts.

By **JERSEY JONES**

Jack Petersen, a classic boxer and good puncher, who was being touted by British as likely world heavyweight champion, had his ambitious dreams exploded when German veteran Walter Neusel stopped him not once but three times in London.

A popular product of the "White Hope Era", Jim Coffey was headed for a match with the new champion, Jess Willard, when supposed "victim", Frank Moran, wrecked his plans by flattening him in New York, then doing it again for confirmation.



Sonny Ray's "Hex" on Jesse Bowdry Recalls Many Historic Cases of Inferior Fighters Who Have Exerted Strange Mastery Over More Highly Rated Rivals



As professionals there has been just as wide a gap between the two as there had been as amateurs. Aside from their series with each other, Bowdry has been unbeaten, with 20 of his 24 victories ending in knockouts, while Ray has posted 14 wins against five draws and five defeats. Two of Sonny's setbacks have been by kayos.

RAY HAD BOWDRY'S "NUMBER."

Bowdry had gone on from his two early defeats by Ray to become something of a sensation in the sock market. Jesse not only had crashed his way to main-event status but a listing among the division's Big Ten. Twice he had been featured on national television, whipping experienced Clarence Hinnant and stopping durable Jerry Luedec.

Ray, meanwhile, was still plugging along inconspicuously in preliminary bouts. The longest route Sonny had travelled was once over eight rounds. Most of his fighting had been in six-rounders.

With Bowdry booked for another TV date in Chicago, the promoters were having their troubles locating a suitable opponent. The light-heavyweight division hasn't been too wealthy in talent of late and none of the few good ones was available to serve as Bowdry's vis-a-vis.

The promoters decided to take a chance with Ray. After all, he did hold two wins over Bowdry, and they were sufficient justification for the match.

On all form charts, shifty, sharpshooting Bowdry figured to annihilate Ray this time. He did—for a few rounds. But the plodding Ray, surviving those rough early moments, went on to outlast the St. Louisian and batter him out of circulation in the ninth round.

Sonny is the only guy ever to beat Bowdry, and to prove it's been no accident or coincidence, he's done it three times! The "Indian Sign" certainly has worked for him.

OTHER HISTORIC CASES.

Although he had compiled an impressive record in his Rocky Mountain bailiwick, few authorities regarded Young Corbett (Billy Rothwell) as a serious threat to the great Terry McGovern when the Denverite came east in 1901 for the meeting in Hartford.

When the populace recovered from Corbett's stunning knockout of McGovern, the general reaction was that a

Stylish Jimmy Webb, who lost chance at light-heavyweight championship by getting knocked out in "tune-up" bout with little known Mose Brown in Pittsburgh. In an effort to wipe that defeat off his record, Webb met Brown again, then a third time—and was flattened in each bout!



"lucky punch" was responsible.

It wasn't. Corbett had the "Indian Sign" on Terrible Terry. He proved it a year and a half later when he flattened McGovern again, this time in San Francisco.

Boxing has known few more able judges of ring talent than the late George Engel, and of all the fighters he handled during his long, active career George regarded middleweight Frank Klaus as the best. To Engel, the Pittsburgher was one of the trade's all-time greats, and there was ample reason for his conviction. Klaus' record was an imposing one. It included knockouts of Willie Lewis, Tommy Sullivan, Jimmy Gardner, Montana Jack Sullivan and Frank Mantell, and decisions over Jack Dillon, Leo Houck and Georges Carpentier. Klaus also had fought on even terms with Stanley Ketchel in a no-decision affair.

In 1913 Klaus returned from Europe after beating fellow-American and former champion Billy Papke. The victory had given Frank a clear claim to the world title which had been in dispute since Ketchel's untimely passing in 1910.

In his native Pittsburgh, Klaus was paired with George Chip, a young Greek from nearby New Castle. Chip was tough and durable, but didn't figure to be much more than a brisk workout for the talented champion. Something, however, went amiss with the advance calculations. Chip knocked Klaus loose from the middleweight title in the sixth round.

It was the first time Frank had been flattened, and the Pittsburgher insisted it was an accident. He demanded a return match and was accommodated in the same ring two months later. Chip finished him again, this time in the fifth round.

SOUR CREAM IN JIM'S COFFEY.

Although Jess Willard had ended the weird "White Hope Era" by relieving Jack Johnson of the world title in Havana early in 1915, the tumult and the shouting in the busy heavyweight ranks continued. Instead of chasing after Johnson, however, the big 'uns were now battling among themselves for a crack at Willard.

The most popular box-office attraction in New York at the time was a husky Irishman, Jim Coffey, dubbed the "Roscommon Giant," and managed by astute Billy Gibson. A good boxer for a big fellow, and a tremendous puncher, 6 foot-1 inch, 210-pound Coffey had been belting over the opposition in sensational fashion, and seemed well on his way to a match with Willard when he was paired with Frank Moran in Madison Square Garden.

Moran, a burly Pittsburgh blond, had just returned from a European jaunt. Frank was tough, durable and a good puncher, but he figured to be too slow and cumbersome (Continued on page 60)

Middleweight Champion Frank Klaus, who expected little more than a brisk workout when he faced young George Chip in Pittsburgh. Chip, in startling upset, knocked Klaus out and relieved him of title. Claiming an "accident" and eager for revenge, Klaus was rematched with Chip—and knocked out again!



AMERICANS LOSE PRESTIGE

(Continued from page 7)

number of non-U.S. victories recorded in preliminary bouts.

Zuany, the Mexican, has won seven straight this year against U.S. fighters; Britisher Dave Rent has turned in seven wins in eight fights; Bob Cleroux, of Canada, achieved three wins and a draw in four bouts, including an impressive kayo over former amateur star Solomon McTier. Another Canadian, Benito Favotto, has turned in two victories in two starts while German Karl-Heinz Wendt has won three out of five bouts.

Will the trend continue in the future? That is the big question? America has only Sonny Liston of Philadelphia, and McMurtry among the top contenders, who might change the trend. Among the second raters there are no American heavyweights who could be classed as sure comers.

Dropping down to the prospect stage the United States boasts a number of lads who could move up into the contenders class. They are led by Ernest Terrell of Chicago, Dave Shoulders of Detroit, Lee Williams, Bob Butcher of San Francisco, Joe Hemphill of Chicago, and Terry Lewis of Spokane, Wash.

Outside of the U.S., other countries are well stocked with Mino Bozzano of Italy, Cleroux of Canada, Joe Armstrong of Ghana, Ilkka Koski of Finland, Gawie de Klerk of South Africa, Sifa Kifalu of Tonga, Uli Ritter and Albert Westphal of Germany and Santo Amonti, Mario DePersio and Massimo Zanaboni all of Italy.

Both sides have the resources to keep up their end in the future. Can the Americans regain the upper hand and prove that this past three months was just a fluke or has the tide turned just as it did in the lower classes where the foreign boxers now dominate.

THE INDIAN SIGN

(Continued from page 23)

for the clever, sharpshooting Coffey.

'Tis said that anything can happen when two Irishmen start swinging at one another. Anything did happen that night. Moran wrecked Coffey in the third round.

Big Jim wasn't satisfied. He clamored for another bout with Moran. Frank obliged. Less than three months later the rivals met again in the same ring. Moran needed nine rounds to complete the job this time, but he did it. Coffey had beaten better fighters than Moran, but he just couldn't whip Frank. The latter had the "Indian Sign" on him.

When he was campaigning in California's four-round circuit in 1917 and '18, Jack Dempsey's most troublesome

problem was "Fat Willie" Meehan. They tangled three times, with Manassa Jack getting worse instead of better. Dempsey won the first decision. The second bout resulted in a draw. Roly-poly Meehan, continuing to improve, was the winner in the third clash. Disgusted, Dempsey ended the series then and there.

Middleweight Champion Mike O'Dowd dropped into Boston one night in 1920 for what was expected to be just another fight for him. Mike didn't anticipate much difficulty with his opponent, southpaw Johnny Wilson, who rated little better than ordinary. It was a stunning jolt to the boxing world when the news flashed out of the Hub that Wilson had been awarded the verdict and the title.

O'Dowd's constituents promptly howled "Boston decision." Wilson didn't take too kindly to the squawks. "Maybe I'm not the best middleweight in the world," he said, "and maybe O'Dowd can beat fighters who can beat me, but he's one guy I can lick anywhere at any time."

Wilson had the chance to prove it a year and half later. The return match was arranged for "neutral" Madison Square Garden. Wilson was right. He may not have been the best middleweight in the world but Mike O'Dowd was one guy he could beat.

A SHOCK FOR BRITAIN.

Getting excited over their heavyweights has been old established practice in Britain, but of all the 'big uns produced in this century it is doubtful if any one attracted more enthusiastic raves than Jack Petersen, a stylish boxer-puncher of the '30s.

After a brilliant amateur career, Petersen turned professional in 1931 and in four years lost only one decision in 31 starts. That one defeat, inflicted by ringwise Len Harvey, was erased when the Welshman knocked Harvey out in a return match.

Of Petersen's 30 victories, 19 had been by the kayo route. Not only leading British rivals but many of the top European continentals had fallen before Petersen's classic boxing and snappy punching. Jack had been especially successful against Germans, and it was generally predicted that the veteran Walter Neusel would go the way of his Teutonic predecessors when he was imported to London to tangle with Petersen early in 1935.

Neusel, however, had other ideas. Absorbing rugged punishment most of the way, the durable German outlasted the favored Welshman and stopped him in the eleventh round.

It was a bewildering shock to Jack and the British populace. A return match was demanded, and a few months later Petersen was accommo-

dated. This time Neusel bettered his previous performance by one round. He halted the Welshman in the tenth session.

Those defeats exploded Petersen's hopes of becoming a world champion, but Jack remained unconvinced that he wasn't a better fighter than Neusel. Two years later the Welshman was given a third chance to beat the German, but the "Indian Sign" was too much for him. Again in London, Neusel stopped him in the tenth round. That was enough for Petersen. He announced his retirement from the ring.

CHRIS WILL NEVER FORGET.

One of the most successful operatives this trade has known is Chris Dundee, now based in Miami Beach after spending a large part of his busy career bouncing all over the global landscape, promoting fights and managing fighters. With all his hustle and bustle, however, there is one harrowing chapter in Dundee's past that probably will haunt Chris for the rest of his life.

It was in 1941 and Dundee was handling Jimmy Webb, a stylish boxer and sharpshooting puncher out of Texas.

Billy Conn had just given up the light-heavyweight to campaign as a heavyweight. An elimination tourney was in progress in New York to determine Conn's successor.

Webb was a strong favorite to win. Jimmy had turned in a brilliant exhibition in stopping Tommy Tucker in Madison Square Garden and advancing to the tourney's semi-final round.

Dundee wasn't one to keep his fighters idle, even with important matches ahead. Chris believed the best way for a ringster to stay in top condition was by fighting frequently. While awaiting the next round of the championship tourney, he booked Webb for a tune-up with a Mose Brown in Pittsburgh.

The tune-up turned out to be a disaster. Brown knocked Webb out in the second round.

Insisting the result was an accident, but realizing he had to get that defeat off Webb's record if Jimmy was to remain in the title series, Dundee promptly hauled the Texan back to Pittsburgh for a rematch with Brown.

This time Webb lasted until the fifth round before Brown caught up to him.

Dundee was a tough 'un to convince. For the third time in less than two months he sent Webb against Brown in Pittsburgh. It was Jimmy's best showing of the lot. He managed to reach the sixth round before Ol' Man Mose nailed him again.

That was enough for Dundee and Webb.

The "Indian Sign" can be a mighty powerful factor in this trade.